

“CHURCH ORTHODOX UKRAINIAN AUTOCEPHALOUS”: WHY IS A MISTAKE

The recent decision to establish a "Unified Ukrainian Church" under the auspices and by decision of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, which has no direct jurisdiction over Ukrainian territory, represents the breaking of a series of consolidated historical rules and situations, after decades of discussions on to situations that had already been negatively assessed both by the Patriarchate of Constantinople and by that of Moscow and by the other Orthodox Churches, and which today - with an unchanged historical situation - has the flavor of pure "political contention" regarding the status of the ecclesiastical territory of Ukraine.

The Patriarchate of Moscow has already intervened promptly (on October 15, 2018) with its own deliberation ([readable here](#)) which highlights the points of contrast with the decision of the Patriarchate of Constantinople of October 11th to readmit two people to ecclesial communion who had already been excommunicated in the 1990s for constituting, without the authorization of the Moscow Patriarchate and without the 'permission' of other patriarchates - who however are not directly competent on the Ukrainian ecclesial territory - two parallel "ecclesial" realities to the canonical Church Orthodox of Ukraine of the Moscow Patriarchate, which is already present in the Country of Kiev and regularly in communion with the other Orthodox Churches.

Therefore this decision of the Patriarchate of Constantinople - to re-admit to the ecclesial communion two people already excommunicated for "schism", that is, for having created ecclesial subjects already schismatic because they were neither foreseen nor authorized to be or self-attributing the characteristic of "autocephaly", that is, self-government that is instead granted by the Patriarchate of reference, contravening in this the rules according to which these same people had already been excommunicated previously - instead makes these people and their “parallel” ecclesial realities the foundation of a new and unofficial "Ukrainian Unified Orthodox Church", and with this a series of forcing and irregularities are determined which go in the direction of breaking a series of internal rules to the Orthodox world and also to the definition of faith.

First of all, as already underlined in the decision of the Patriarchate of Moscow on October 15, two people are re-admitted to ecclesial communion for the same reason for which they had been excluded from it, ie by "schism", for having created unauthorized ecclesial subjects. Of these people the contrary is done to the one that prescribes the evangelical saying ("The stone rejected by the builders has become a corner head"; Matthew 21:42, Mark 12:10 and Luke 20:17), that is, if it is done the foundation for constituting a new building in which the regular "Ukrainian Orthodox Church" of the Moscow Patriarchate could have participated by "co-optation", that is

by kind invitation of the Christian constituents of the new "Autocephalous Ukrainian Orthodox Church".

This would also have led to the change in the status of the current Ukrainian Orthodox Church, which would have passed from the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate to that of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. This jurisdiction had never been challenged by other patriarchates, but it is the result of the history and interdependence relations that exist between Ukraine and Russia since the 10th century AD.

Today, however, only for reasons of opportunity or political pressure, not only has the first decision been diminished in practice, but the status of the Ukrainian Church is totally changed - or it would be totally changed - both because an "ecclesial jurisdiction" is constituted of the Patriarchate of Constantinople on Ukrainian territory which, in the absence of a remission by the Patriarchate of Moscow, has no way of advancing, either excluding the legitimate Church from a constituted "Ukrainian Orthodox Church", ie that led by the Patriarch Onufriy Berezovsky.

These decisions were opposed both by the Patriarchate of Moscow, as already mentioned, and by the Patriarch of Ukraine Onufriy Berezovsky, who gathered the Holy Synod on December 17 and communicated in turn a decree, [readable here](#).

Meanwhile, the constituting "new Ukrainian Unified Church", under the blessing and completely irregular auspices of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, would be established and would have indicated its own "patriarch" in the person of Epiphanius Dumenko, former Metropolitan of Kiev for the "Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kiev Patriarchate" (UOC-KP), a schismatic church founded by Filaret Denysenko who, for this reason - together with the "parallel attempt" of Makariy Maletych - had been excommunicated by the Patriarchate of Constantinople along with all the others. This constitution process would then find an "official confirmation" on 6 January 2019, with the concession, by the Patriarchate of Constantinople, of the decree of "autocephaly" (indicated in Greek with the word "Tomos"), which would represent official recognition - for Churches canonically constituted and that therefore would also have the right to receive it - and documentary of the achievement of the "legal status" of an independent church within the ecclesial communion of the Orthodox Churches. In this case, however, not only is an "official Orthodox Church" already present on Ukrainian territory, namely the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate, but in fact there would now be at least the presence of two Orthodox 'patriarchs' on Ukrainian territory, one of which, necessarily, can neither be nor, obviously, nor "orthodox".

This whole process, which is certainly neither urgent - there is not a very grave power vacuum that justifies such a rapid process of establishing a "national church" nor does it lack a guide expressed by the legitimate Moscow Patriarchate competent on Ukrainian territory - nor strictly necessary, since a regular "orthodox church" on

Ukrainian territory is already present, as mentioned, it simply has the 'sign' of a series of irregularities which, once approved or remediated in Ukraine, could be repeated elsewhere, for example in other territories under the jurisdiction of Moscow Patriarchate, such as Estonia, Belarus or Moldova, and determine the distortion of the rules of territorial jurisdiction of the Patriarchates as determined so far, since the Patriarchate of Constantinople - perhaps in dissonance of how the role of Patriarchy "primus inter pares" could be understood in an extensive way as has been configured up to now - it is competent only for the ecclesial territories that are directly attributed to it, also because (both in the history of the Church and in current practice) there is no coincidence or urgency that the territories of ecclesial jurisdictions coincide with those of the States that may have been constituted on them, since the two administrations - that of the Church and that of any States - are different, and there is no obligation of alignment (by whom?) of the jurisdiction of the Church to that of the State, whose practice of "nationalization" is a simplification - at the linguistic, cultural or custom level - that may not always be coincident.

This raises the question of the so-called "filetism", that is, of the tendency to bring together the ecclesial jurisdiction that is present in the territorial level in question with that of the state realities already constituted or to be constituted. This fact does not constitute an obligation for the Church - which is neither a state nor a territorial institution in the strict sense nor a "national" one, but is a "supranational" or "international" institution, whose jurisdiction actually extends in the area of ecclesial communion that is defined in the middle organizations, among which the two macro-areas are constituted by the Catholic Church traditionally in the West and by the Orthodox Church traditionally in the East, intermediate organizations that are the "Episcopal Conferences" in the Catholic Church (constituted among others, only recently, starting from the second half of the nineteenth century), or the "autocephalous Churches" in the Orthodox Church (which are autonomous - not like the Episcopal Conferences - but always within the Orthodox communion), "autocephalous Churches" which represent a more ancient phenomenon (they date back to the twelfth century in the context of the Orthodox Church) but they are preceded by a similar practice in the undivided Church that preceded the schism of 1054: it is from the fifth century in fact the concession to the archbishopric of the island of Cyprus of the "autocephaly", ie ecclesiastical autonomy, granted and registered in the Council of Ephesus of 431.

Therefore, it is correct to start not from the national or state point of view - Ukraine does not represent a juridical subject within the Church, but is the object of the Church's intervention with reference to the ecclesial organisms present or already constituted - but from the point of view of the ecclesial realities, which must be an expression - in order to be defined as such - of the will, the magisterium, the praxis, the recognition and the guidance of the ecclesial community, which is entrusted to the

practice of the Orthodox Church in central-eastern Europe through the Patriarchates that define their territories and competences.

Therefore the requests must not come from the States, that is, it is not the Church that must adapt to the processes of state or territorial reorganization: it is the State that should in theory "convert", not the Church "nationalize". The processes of simplification, territorial or cultural-linguistic - Ukraine is a typical case of a "hybrid" nationality, in which the pro-Russian or culturally and linguistically linked minorities of Russia are numerous - and the proximity to the Moscow State as well as the historical events that have linked the peoples of the two countries are the testimony of this mutual "hybridization". And so the processes of ecclesial "nationalization" are a facilitation or, as we say in the ecclesiastical jargon of Catholicism, they are an "inculturation", an inversion, an incarnation of faith in the cultural context in which clergy and laity work.

Therefore, the starting point for reflection should be, for example:

- does an Orthodox Church exist or already exists in Ukraine?
- Who represents it? Of which ecclesial reality is an expression?
- How do you become priests or bishops or hierarchy of the Church in the territory of Ukraine?
- Who is competent at the ecclesial level for the territory of the Country included in the borders of the current Ukrainian state?
- Why is the Moscow Patriarchate (which is competent on the ecclesial territory of the Ukrainian nation) or is it at odds with the Patriarchate of Constantinople?
- What are the competences of the Patriarchate of Constantinople regarding the Ukrainian question?
- What does the fact that the Patriarchate of Constantinople is recognized as "primus inter pares" (ie "first among peers") among the Churches that form part of the Orthodox ecclesial coordination? It is a Patriarchate like the others, which has jurisdiction only over the territories to which care is entrusted, and the granting of "autocephaly" (which is bestowed, in terms of a "cession of sovereignty", by the Patriarchate that was previously the owner of exclusive jurisdiction over that territory) is entitled to it only for the territories included in its jurisdiction?
- Who are the subjects who are part of unauthorized "autocephalous churches", and who, as such, are appointed or considered priests, bishops, patriarchs or metropolitans? Who were they named? How is it possible that an ancient and long-standing Patriarchate like that of Constantinople, which historically exercises the role of "coordinator" within the world of orthodoxy, first commits excommunication for "schism" (which is a grave sin emphasized by maximum ecclesial punishment) that were also signed by the other Orthodox Churches, and then convoke the same people
- who did not interrupt their ecclesial activity (excommunication consists in expulsion from the ecclesial community and determines not only the decline of the ecclesial

positions held but it is a condition of irregularity that coincides, in fact, with the condemnation of hell on Earth) or proselytism in this direction, even to call them together to form a "new Ukrainian Autocephalous Church" that, in an official way, would like to co-opt internal the already present and regular "Ukrainian Orthodox Church" led now by the patriarch Onufriy Berezovsky, who had been offered (even) participation in a "constituent synod" to which he could also participate as a patriarch candidate for the leadership of the new ecclesial constituent reality, in effect making him fall away from the role of patriarch as he is now and also as a guide of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, and in this way making the participation of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church a legitimizing factor for the constituting new ecclesial organism, which at that point would have replaced the "old" Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate, superimposing the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople to that of the Patriarchate of Russia.

- That said, and in light of the improvement of the ecclesial operation called "constitution of the Autocephalous Church in Ukraine" with the possible concession of the "autocephaly decree" on January 6, 2019 at the headquarters of the Patriarchate of Constantinople in Istanbul, as it is possible that the Patriarch of Constantinople could remain such, that is, a patriarch of the Orthodox Church, having already imposed and subsequently confirmed the condemnation for schism to two subjects who instead are the direct and indirect guarantors and executors of the new ecclesial project called "Autocephalous church" of Ukraine?

The Patriarchate of Moscow, in its decree of October 15, has already decided to suspend ecclesial communion and formal relations with the Patriarchate of Constantinople, to which it no longer recognizes the competence of inter-Orthodox ecclesial coordination. It is therefore evident that, in the short or medium term, and probably, is necessary to put the question of the change of coordination within the current Orthodox world, given the decision of the Moscow Patriarchate to exercise its jurisdiction in the traditional terms of its own role.

What we do not understand is instead the ecclesial and cultural motive which brought the Patriarchate of Constantinople first to retrace its steps - since it had already condemned the schismatic churches born on the territory of Ukraine - and then in fact to overlap with the ecclesial jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate, leading to a crisis that is unprecedented, willed and to which it also want to fulfill.

It is evident that the same Patriarchate of Constantinople, in this way, stands at the same level as the schismatics, situating itself as a "patriarchate of schism" within the Orthodox ecclesial communion and determining, evidently, following this decision, a invalidity of one's own profile and of the decisions taken on the merits of Orthodox ecclesial praxis, coming even less - as "schismatic" - its position within the Orthodox ecclesial communion.

Therefore, if the process of creation of the "Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Ukraine", whose should be Patriarch Epiphanius Dumenko, will be accomplished, it is clear that all the subjects involved in the story - namely the Patriarch who will propose this appointment, the patriarch 'in pectore' and even members of the constituent "autocephalous Orthodox Church of Ukraine" - would be subject to the same punishment of excommunication, since they incur the same schismatic condition that underlies this ecclesial operation, and at this point this should be established by a special synod convened from the Orthodox Churches of the coordination, which should provide or mistrust of the current Patriarch of Constantinople as "coordinator" or "primus inter pares", or solicit from the ecclesiastical Constantinopolitan synod the appointment of a new Patriarch to replace Bartholomew, or decide to establish a new "coordinator" of the Orthodox ecclesial world, which at that point could hardly be an expression of the same Patriarchate of Constantinople, given the evident and often feared "forcing".

It is clear, however, that this episode is neither accidental nor untimely, and represents the desire to imperiously change, by the Patriarchate of Constantinople, the ecclesial balances that have existed so far in the Orthodox world and to want to become in effect a "totalitarian organ" within the Orthodoxy. Of this, probably, the patriarchs and churches that are part of inter-Orthodox coordination, and who have already communicated their dissent with respect to the decisions of Constantinople, should take note and probably act accordingly.

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In this reflection, so far conducted on the disciplinary or canonical aspects of the 'Ukrainian question', considerations can also be made regarding the defense, of a historical and documentary type, that the Patriarchate of Constantinople has made regarding its decision to review, substantially, the agreement of territorial jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate on the Ukrainian ecclesial territory.

The Patriarchate recently released a document produced by the Archdiocese of Venice and Malta, of the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, on September 2018 ([here available in Italian](#)) in which it is attempted to demonstrate the historical groundlessness of the letter with which the administration of Ukrainian ecclesiastical territory was granted to the Patriarchate of Moscow in 1686 by the Patriarchate of Constantinople.

The text of this recent document of the Patriarchate of Constantinople has been commented and 'cleared' by the Orthodox priest Theodore Zisis, in an article published on the website of the Moscow Patriarchate (<http://www.pravoslavie.ru/118002.html>) taken again from the "Holy Mountain" site.

According to a general analysis, the current purpose of the Patriarchate of Constantinople - inspired by external environments - is to create tensions within the Ukrainian civil and ecclesial body (the timing is not random, since it comes only a few days after the naval battle that took place in the Azov Sea between Ukrainian boats and the Russian coastguard) to respond, in view of the upcoming Ukrainian presidential elections of March 2019, the state of tension and "mobilization" of the society that accompanied the establishment of the Poroshenko regime in 2014.

It is also possible to exclude that foreign intelligence circles, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union (whose Ukraine was part), wanted to create the two "Ukrainian autocephalous churches" of Denysenko and Maletych and then be able to give life later to a process of substitution and consequent destabilization or annexation of the Country, in which the Orthodox Church, expression of the Moscow Patriarchate, would be supplanted by a 'parallel' body directed by organizations outside Ukraine.

THE ANALYSIS OF PROFESSOR ZISIS

In his article, Professor Zisis intends to confirm - contrary to what is now affirmed by the Patriarchate of Constantinople - that the decision to bring Ukraine back under the jurisdiction of the Russian Patriarchate was taken freely and with awareness deriving from historical tradition, and it was not therefore an emergency dictated for example only by the 'technical' proximity of the territory of Ukraine more to Moscow than to Turkey for example, nor by a manipulative decision, and this fact is confirmed by the following centuries (more than 300 years) during which no one has ever raised doubts about the historical legitimacy and validity of that decision.

In the Ukrainian question, says Professor Zisis, the historical truth is on the side of the Russian Church, while the risk for the Greek-speaking Churches is that they fall into "ethnofletism", that is, in the subordination of the Church's practice to national-nationalistic evaluations, which contradict the attribute of "universality" which is proper to the Church and which can nourish "nationalist" tensions within the Orthodox world as well. In reality, this dimension, typical of the Orthodox ecclesiastical organization in which the autonomy of the Orthodox Church can coincide with the coincidence of the same ecclesial structures with the reference territorial-national level, may be the result of the particular configuration of the Church itself which, not recognizing the Petrine primacy, and therefore not identifying precisely the source of the legitimacy of the Church on Earth - for historical and ecclesial reasons deriving from the 'formal' schism of 1054 - seeks its legitimacy in a so-called "Tomos", that is, in a decree by which the competent Patriarch - which is Constantinople or Moscow - allows the "birth" and the subjective legitimization of a recognized and regular ecclesial reality in the Orthodox world

which is the national "autocephalous church". Therefore, it may be normal for tensions to accumulate around the "statute of independence", since it is perceived with its own legitimacy in the strict sense, as well as from a certain point of view - historically always existed, since the times in the life of Jesus - it may be normal for this dimension, like for example the ethnic tensions that can occur in the multi-national countries (think of the "Balkan crisis" of the years 1995-99 during which the element of ethnic-religious differentiation has been used to obtain the break and dissolution of the Yugoslav state) can be used to break balances from time to time deemed politically, economically or militarily inconvenient.

Therefore, since the condition of the Church also depends on the context in which it operates, the state factor in considering the quality of social peace and the type of ecclesial action has never been neutral. Therefore, if it is true that the level of contention necessarily concentrates around the canonical, ecclesial, religious or theological factors, it is necessary to consider also the political aspects that are involved in ecclesiological events, because the analysis of these allows to understand both the reasons underlying the choices of breakage and to foresee possible outcomes, especially for the Churches and the population involved. This type of assessment is not far in the way of considering the type of events that have happened recently in Ukraine, driven by a strong anti-Russian sentiment started with the promises of the "Maidan" demonstrations of 2013.

One of the theses sustained by the Patriarchate of Constantinople in his September 2018 document is the idea that the Russians, and in the alternative evidently the Ukrainians, owe their faith directly to the Patriarchate of Constantinople ("As is well known to all, the Ukrainians and all peoples, who come from ancient Rus' owe their Christian faith and Orthodoxy to the Ecumenical Patriarchate", page 3), apart from the historically relevant fact that the Patriarchate of Constantinople (within the "pentarchy") formed by Rome, ex-patriarch of the West, Antioch, Alexandria and Jerusalem) is the territorial jurisdiction for the Euro-Eastern and Central-Asian area in the west and north of the Black Sea.

With this statement a threefold error is committed, historical, theological and ecclesiastical: the faith of the "patriarchates" does not derive from themselves (they are not a "subject of faith") but derive their function in the Church from the ecclesial organization resulting to the first centuries of the spread of Christianity, since, among other things, faith derives first of all from Christ, secondly - this is the historical origin of faith - from the preaching of the apostles, that is from the group of disciples who accompanied Jesus through his life and then spread his preaching in the decades following Jesus' death, and in the second instance by the successive group of disciples and witnesses of the faith.

This patrimony of faith, however, is part of the history of the undivided Church, until 1054, when the Patriarchate of Constantinople recognized itself in the unique

Catholic Church that had the first Pope in St. Peter and in the Bishop of Rome the "primus inter pares" among all the patriarchs and bishops of the Christian world.

And so, if it is true that the pope's history does not formally concern either Constantinople or the Orthodox Church today, that is why in this, "autocephalous" (that is, not recognizing the Petrine primacy, it bases its authority on the legislation of Ecumenical Councils and on his own experience, very difficult at times, also perceiving himself, perhaps recently, as a subject parceled out in many "autocephalic", multiplying which one can almost think of adding further "legitimization centers" of his own ecclesiastical nature, but in this process "betrays" the lack of its total merit), it is probable that the solution of the problem, which can potentially tear the Orthodox world, can be found outside it, that is, for example, unexpectedly, in the Roman papacy; otherwise, it could be devastating, for example, the action of an "ecumenical patriarchate" that behaves like a de facto "papacy", that means that it alone has decisions and the 'ultimate' role even of the undisputed leader of the whole Church, a role that, by its nature and historical function, belongs to the pope of Rome, even though the Orthodox still do not (re)-recognize it.

Here, the solution, far from being able to find itself in the current order of the Orthodox world, could be at least maintaining the current inter-ecclesial balance, respecting the relative spheres of influence, while waiting for the ecclesial framework - which includes both the Catholic Church and the Oriental-Orthodox one - is clarified, without forcing in the "papist" direction by a patriarchy within the Orthodox Church.

The forcing in the decision-making sense, which was probably solicited from the outside, has instead its effect ineffectiveness, since the Orthodox don't tolerate - for historical and theological-ecclesial reasons - the forcing in that direction, and get as a result the inevitable breakage of the delicate ecclesial balances reached so far.

It should also be noted that the Patriarchate of Moscow, in its reorganization following the end of the Soviet period, in the years 2000 produced a document on its identity (readable on the [Russian site of Pravmir](#)) which is a sort of "dictatus patriarchae" in which they are listed the prerogatives of the 'pope of Moscow', with the addition of a curious but certainly not a 'casual' prerogative, that is that he "has a duty to encourage and 'grieve' the state authorities both in the canonical territory and outside of their borders "(point 7-J; in Russian: "имеет долг ходатайства и "печалования" перед органами государственной власти как на канонической территории, так и за ее пределами ").

It is probably the possibility that the Patriarch of Moscow, within the Orthodox configuration or the whole constituted by the Church, can change his own status, from the "head of the Russian national Church", or from a group of national

Churches, to Pope the whole Church, which therefore addresses "erga omnes" (ie 'towards all').

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Professor Zisis points out in his article that, historically, the "Kiev period", beginning with the baptism of Prince Vladimir (in the year 988) and continuing until 1240, is considered as the starting date of the life of the Church in Russia, when there was the Tatar-Mongol invasion. Throughout this period, Kiev was in fact the capital of Russia, its political, ecclesial, cultural center and the basis of the organization of the state. Subsequently, the foreign conquests of the territories of Kiev forced the rulers to transfer their political and ecclesial center further north (first to Vladimir and then to Moscow cities), without renouncing the jurisdiction of the Church over Kiev and Ukrainian territory. Even when the capitals were the cities of Vladimir and Moscow, there still existed a single "Metropolis of the Russian Church" (i.e. ecclesial territory of the Russian Church), which even when it was temporarily subject to Constantinople was still referred to as "Kiev and the Russia Metropolis".

It is noteworthy to remember that, contrary to the efforts of foreign powers (Western and Latin) who have tried to separate the unique metropolis consisting of "Kiev" and "all the Russias" to establish a second metropolis within that territory (as today there is an attempt to create a "autocephalous Ukrainian church" within the territory under the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate), already at the time this attempt was not possible.

When, by the pressures of Constantinople, some Patriarchs allowed the creation of a second ecclesial territory within the ensemble constituted by Ukraine plus Russia, their successors immediately abolished the second metropolis just created and restored the unity of the Russian-Ukrainian Church.

After the Mongol-Tartar invasion of 1240, the city of Kiev was destroyed and the population had to move to the north-east; the Metropolitan headquarters was therefore moved first to the city of Vladimir, in 1299, and then to Moscow in 1328. Although after the Tatar-Mongol conquest, the Metropolia's headquarters were no longer in Kiev, the city retained its traditional title of head office of the "Metropolitan of Kiev and all of Russia", to indicate a situation therefore considered however transient and natural the unity between the territories of Kiev and Moscow, as well as the metropolitan of the Russian Church retained the title of "bishop of the city of Kiev".

During the Mongol domination, the Church of Rome tried to force the Russian people to re-enter the Catholic Church, subordinating it to the papacy through the alliance with Poland and Lithuania, also through the organization of military crusades.

The Russians resisted militarily, and associated the conquest 'manu militari' by the West to the already existing attempts of 'ecclesiastical-cultural annexation' under the

sign of the Roman Church (a similar process, we could say, to 'forced conversions' followed by conquest of America).

This resistance to papism was not present in the territory of Kiev, and so Poland and Lithuania were able to subjugate territories and managed to expand their influence on economic as well as cultural and religious-ecclesial levels.

To do so, they succeeded in obtaining the independence of the south-western regions of Russia (present-day Ukraine) from the centralized administration of the Church of Moscow, thus succeeding in obtaining the constitution of a Second and Third metropolis within the "Metropolis of Kiev and all of Russia".

Likewise, the current process of 'autocephalisation' of the Orthodox Church in Ukraine would be driven by the same Catholic-uniatist circles (a branch of the Orthodox Church which later passed to Catholicism) and which are pressing for political and cultural reasons for an emancipation of Ukrainian Orthodoxy from the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate.

President Poroshenko is in fact a sympathizer of Uniatism, through which the West is trying to move the geo-political axis of the country towards Central-western Europe, through, inter alia, the obtaining of "autocephaly" autonomously from the Patriarchate of Moscow.

During the political phases of the Second Middle Ages, preserved documents confirm that the territory of present-day Ukraine was always subordinated to the united Russian Church, and were only temporarily separated during certain periods of agitation.

The most current issue concerns the note "concession letter" that the Patriarchate of Constantinople gave to Moscow in 1686 to confirm the passage of ecclesial competence on the territory of Ukraine. The current propaganda tends to push the reunification of the Ukrainian and Russian territories under the same ecclesial Metropolia as a violence exerted by Moscow - on the line of the current anti-Russian and therefore pro-Western propaganda, but if this for other territories ecclesiastic like Cyprus, Crete and Macedonia represents a normal subordination to the Greek Church, for the territories subject to the ecclesiastical administration of Moscow would still be anti-historical, non-canonical, harmful and therefore to be revoked. Certainly, for example, there are no specific requests for "autocephaly" in the name of 'anti-Greekness', because these feelings are created and diverted according to the political convenience of the moment stirred up by ideological-media propaganda. This applies in particular to the current status of Ukraine.

The reunification of the ecclesiastical territories of Kiev and Moscow took place in 1686 because the Polish occupation had returned to the territories of Ukraine, following the military victory of Russia in 1654.

It is possible that after two centuries of subordination of Ukraine to the Poles under the Catholic influence, therefore, there arose of Russian-pro-Papist and therefore pro-Western pushes, who did not want the dependence of Ukrainian Orthodox from the Russian Church, ignoring the ecclesial context.

Professor Zisis notes that in 1992, when deciding on the schismatic activity of the Ukrainian self-proclaimed 'patriarch' Filaret, the patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople wrote a letter to the then Russian patriarch Alexei II in the context of the decision to testify - on the part of the Holy Synod of the Russian Church - the then Metropolitan of the Kiev city Filaret Denysenko, which at the time was part of the Ukrainian Church of the Moscow Patriarchate. In the letter sent by Bartholomew, the competence of the Russian Church was fully recognized on Ukraine, with the premise that "Constantinople would not have created any difficulty in relations with Moscow". This situation has instead been reversed today, above all because the priestly dignity of the schismatic Filaret has been restored.

The text of Bartholomew's letter to Alexy II of 1992 is as follows:

"In response to the corresponding telegram and letter of Your Beatitude concerning the Russian Orthodox Church, which arose in Our Holy Sister, the problems that led her Holy Synod, for reasons known to it, to the overthrow of the leading member of the Synod of the Metropolitan of Kiev Kyril Filaret until recently, we wish fraternally to inform your love that Our Holy Great Church of Christ, recognizing the fullness of the exclusive competence of your Most Holy Russian Church on this matter, makes a synodal decision on the foregoing, not wanting to cause any difficulties to your Sister Church".

(original russian: «В ответ на соответствующие телеграмму и письмо Вашего Блаженства по поводу возникшей в Нашей Святейшей Сестре - Русской Православной Церкви - проблемы, которая привела ее Священный Синод, по известным ему причинам, к низложению до недавнего времени ведущего члена Синода Митрополита Киевского кир Филарета, мы желаем братски сообщить Вашей любви, что Наша Святая Великая Христова Церковь, признавая полноту исключительной по этому вопросу компетенции Вашей Святейшей Русской Церкви, принимает синодальное решение о вышесказанном, не желая доставлять никаких затруднений Вашей Сестре-Церкви»).

The letter indicates that Bartholomew and the Patriarchate of Constantinople were aware of the situation - that is, the decision of the Holy Synod of the Russian Church to depose the hierarch Filaret Denysenko from the seat of Metropolitan of the city of Kiev, and with this letter Bartholomew not only confirms that was aware of the reasons why the Moscow Church had evidently decided to make such a decision, but also that it recognized the Patriarchate of Moscow (and this only 26 years ago and by himself) full and legitimate jurisdiction over the canonical territory of the Ukraine, of which Kiev is evably the capital, and confirmed in fact the decision taken on the

matter by the Synod of Moscow, confirming precisely both the exclusive competence in the matter and his willingness not to interfere with the results of that decision making process, giving but an implicit confirmation (this can be deduced from the friendly tone of the letter).

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The current affirmation of Constantinople that the transfer of Ukraine to the jurisdiction of the Russian Church was only temporary in nature does not stand up to historical evidence. Three-hundred and thirty-two years have passed since 1686, almost three and a half centuries during which no one has claimed a 'temporary' jurisdiction of the Russian Church on Ukrainian territory.

Among the two documents currently cited by Constantinople in support of his thesis there is for example the manuscript code, n° 22, of the Historical and Paleographic Archive of the Cultural Foundation of the National Bank of Greece, which was dated as dating back to the mid-eighteenth century and probably written in the year 1750, as was deduced from the pomegranate present in the charter of the letter.

According to Zisis, this document was given a deliberately tendentious or reticent interpretation.

The other document cited - the one to which reference is most often made - contains the "Patriarchal and Synodal Act" of 1686 which was issued by the Patriarch Dionysius IV, according to which the jurisdiction over the metropolis of Kiev was transferred to the Russian Church. Previously, as pointed out by the Professor Zisis, Kiev had historically been separated - after five centuries of union - by the Russian Church and had temporarily entered the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. When this submission to Poland ended, Ukraine returned to the administrative territory of the Russian Church. The historical question, therefore, more than the relations between the two Patriarchates of Constantinople and Moscow, concerns the temporary participation of Ukraine in the pro-Latin camp supported by Poland and Lithuania, and therefore concerns the then uniatist movement, that is, the overall relations between the Orthodox world, the Catholic world and the middle component, present in Ukraine but not in Russia, constituted by the Uniatist movement (ie from Orthodox or former Orthodox past or who would like to pass to the Roman Catholic Church). If this were also the case for the current situation - President Poroshenko seems to be close to the Uniatist movement - the story could be framed in a plan to move the jurisdiction of Ukraine from that of the Moscow Patriarchate to that of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, which has been said since the post-World War II era to be close to pro-Western Atlantic environments, and could therefore be read as an 'intermediate phase', a sort of 'inter-Orthodox' uniatism that could form an intermediate bridge towards an "Orthodox-Constantinopolitan-

Catholic" Union in honor of the current balance of power that there is in the Vatican, that is substantially under the auspices of Pope Bergoglio.

To interpret this eventuality, which would however provide for a theoretical rapprochement between the Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church, one should know the current ecclesial situation that reigns in the Vatican, where there is a "visible Pope", that is Pope Bergoglio, and another, which preceded him, which remains in the insignia, in the clothes and in the ecclesiastical prerogatives, even if it does not manifest an active teaching of ecclesial or theological value, but which is the pope 'de iure', that is Pope Benedict XVI. Therefore, in order to correctly interpret this situation which has its own implicit and evident canonical profile, there are various texts that have explained the question, like articles that can be found on the blog of Benedict XVI's supporters or the books of the Catholic journalist Aldo Maria Valli or the analysis provided by prof. Roberto Regoli or this explanatory ebook.

To return to the letter of 1686, with which - we repeat – has been re-transferred the jurisdiction of Ukraine to the Russian Orthodox Church, it is a message sent by the Patriarch of Constantinople to that of Moscow in which he is informed of the subordination 'de iure' of the metropolitan of Kiev to that patriarchal throne and remembers the procedure of ordination of the Metropolitan bishops of Kiev, i.e. their election by the local Council of bishops (a local synod). It is therefore evident that, in addition to the formal re-transfer of the jurisdiction of the Ukrainian territory, the canonical dependence of the metropolitan of Kiev from the Russian Church, provided for in the procedure and in the ordination rite, is formally reiterated; it is therefore a sacramental dependency and not only a legal-administrative one. He (the metropolitan of Kiev) is therefore subject to the patriarchal throne of Moscow, and therefore "depends" on him (he is not autocephalous, for example, by the concession of the Council of Ephesus, the archbishop of Cyprus from the fifth century).

Who then proposed a comment to this letter of 1686 in the document circulated by the Patriarchate of Constantinople tends to diminish the scope of the "subjugation" (canonical-ecclesial, non-administrative) of the metropolitan of Kiev by the patriarch of Moscow, and commutes in terms democratic-political 'the issue, giving today to Moscow the 'permission' or the 'privilege' 'to indicate, by pure historical custom (which therefore could be changed) the name of the metropolitan of Kiev, almost just a human situation and not, as it is anyway, a bond of sacramental dependence (as are all hierarchical orders in the Church).

Here then is inserted, at the level of the sacramental reading of the mystery of the Church, a new "ethnofletist" (i.e. territorial-national) conception of the faith, in which the dependence or the construction of ecclesial realities is not recognized on the basis of development in historical, canonical or charismatic terms, but yields to an 'actualism' (probably engendered by the ignorance of historical sources or their

forgetfulness) to reconstruct, on the basis of the present only, the 'sense' of a reality that has been given.

On the basis of this principle, for example, it could be argued that the primacy of Constantinople among the four Eastern patriarchs is also antihistoric, since certainly it can not be said that Constantinople represents the "center of irradiation of Christianity" (current Turkey, of which Constantinople is the capital with the name of Istanbul, after the beginning of the twentieth century, today it is 99.7% of Islamic religion, and Constantinople / Istanbul has only 40,000 Christian Orthodox faithful, compared to a population of the city of 15 million inhabitants, the whole of Turkey then has 81 million inhabitants and the total Greek Orthodox Christians of the country are only 80,000: how can we sustain, for example, that this represents a success in terms of proselytism, if we consider that Turkey is a land of the highest preaching and that Constantinople is the patriarchy "primus inter pares" within the Orthodox world for 15 centuries? The problem is perhaps in the force relations within the Orthodox world or, for example, in the Islamic question?) but this thesis is also supported by other types of reflections, both of an ecclesial type (it makes sense to support a Patriarchate that is more divisive than collaborative and competitive with the Russian Church for example, which today represents more than half of the believers of the Orthodox faith and which is also the "lung" of an Orthodox country, which contrasts the difficult situation of the Church of Rome? It makes sense that even the Orthodox Church, through the Patriarchate of Constantinople, will also enter the sphere of influence of the West, after it has already been, in fact, the Pope of Rome and in a consistent manner since the last sixty years and with an unprecedented current crisis of coexistence (and resignation) of two popes, a fact that has never happened in history?

These are the questions that should be asked, and this operation of strong imbalance and overthrowing within the Orthodox world is simply the attempt to force the situation to make Bartholomew the "pope" of the Orthodox world and block the ascent, in terms of popularity, charisma, influence and action, of the Russian Church led by Kirill with the support also of the president Putin.

It is not by chance that the supporters of the new "autocephalous Ukrainian Church" wanted by Poroshenko have immediately declared that their church will be "against Kirill and against Putin", as if these were the criteria for determining a schism or for creating a new ecclesial reality. This echoes Paul's famous phrase: «When one says, "I belong to Paul", and another, "I am from Apollos", do not you simply show yourself men?» (1 Corinthians 3: 4). Who created this new "autocephalous" church can claim to be of Christ (through its ecclesial ancestry) or can it say only, for example, that it belongs to Poroshenko rather than to Bartholomew?

If this "autocephalous Orthodox" church was for example "neo-uniatist", the question could also be placed in theological terms, but in this case it would still be necessary

to understand what kind of convergence is being sought with Rome, based on which theological and ecclesial (if with that neo-Protestant in fact of Pope Bergoglio or that tomist of Pope Benedict XVI?). In this case, however, it would be an anti-Orthodox drawing by Filaret and Bartolomew, while there would be support for the "relativist" line already inaugurated in the Vatican by Pope Bergoglio, for which today is what counts, and not are important neither the story nor an idea of the future, which should however be framed in a theological-historical perspective, in which the signs must be interpreted, while today it seems that it is only the political agenda that dictates the times also of the Church, in the name however of an anti-oriental political line that wants to sow discord also in the ecclesial field that is already heavily influenced by the irregular situation on the throne of Peter.

To return to the letter of 1686, when the head of the bishops or a pastor transfer their right to the episcopal ordination to another jurisdiction, this is normally done for one case and certainly does not last for three whole centuries in relation to the orders made on that indicated territory. This means that it is not a temporary derogation or a concession, but an organic agreement, which can only change for an order of ancestry - that is, the ascendant decides the eventual change of the agreement, in an order that goes from high to down, and therefore it is the hierarch (the Patriarch of Constantinople) that has been able to determine the change of status of the Ukrainian Church, but then giving Moscow this faculty, determining a definitive change that can now be changed only on the basis of a Moscow decision, and no longer concerns Constantinople, which is at the same level, however, of the Moscow office. It would be as if, for example, the Italian government required the restitution of the Istrian peninsula to Croatia by referring, politically, to the fact that Italy previously owned those territories, ignoring both the historical conditions that led to its passage and the fact that other people in the same legal entities - the Italian state and the Yugoslavian first and then Croatian - have maintained those same agreements.

And for example, the Croatian government has "inherited" that agreement, which in the meantime has been implemented by further decisions. If there is a dispute, as Constantinople has done at present with Moscow, the last must defend itself; in the same way, the Russian government is currently facing attempts at contentiousness that are even addressed to the Soviet past, and it is right that it should also be defended at the level of history, so it is necessary, for example, to address the issue of what they have represented Fascism and Nazism, or Communism and anti-Communism, and if the degenerations in the fascist camp were structural and therefore desired, while in Communism there could have been excesses of the repression of dissent, for example.

According to the historical reconstruction made by Professor Zisis, Kiev would be a natural and integral part of the Russian Church from the beginning of the Christianization of the Russians (in the year 988, with the baptism of Prince

Vladimir). The Patriarchate of Constantinople has guarded this unity of the Russians and their Church until they have ruled patriarchs or non-loyal or unintelligent in times of foreign rule, which has divided the Russians along lines of religious demarcation, under pressure or the influence of the Latins or the Uniate ones. The current attitude of Patriarch Bartholomew to Moscow would repeat the same error, and would follow the attitude of the West, which cultivates and spreads a feeling of russophobia according to the principle of "divide et impera".

And so the captious and misleading interpretation of the two documents analyzed by Professor Zisis, however, deliberately detaching them from the reality of events, is due to an ideological interpretation in order to justify an ecclesiastical policy opposed to the attitude held to date by Constantinople within of the Orthodox world.

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